

AGRICULTURE: STEWARDS OF A HEALTHY PLANET

“A reasonable agriculture would do its best to emulate nature. Rather than change the earth to suit a crop...it would diversify its crop to suit the earth.” – Verlyn Klinkenborg

As an interconnected world, we realize agricultural pursuits come with environmental damage, but a life without agriculture is fictitious thinking. With a population of 9 billion to feed by the year 2050 and an environment that desperately needs advocates, agriculturalists are answering the call and are truly being stewards of a healthy planet. Agriculturalists are continuously improving their techniques leading to a healthier environment with each advancement. They are selling locally, using additives in a precise and environmentally conscious way, and creating sustainable agricultural practices.

With the economic pressure to go local, many farmers have found themselves emerging into the agricultural spot light. Selling directly to consumers decreases greenhouse gas emission by reducing travel miles while providing fresh produce; some of the methods to do so are farmers markets and Farm to School programs. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, the number of farmers markets has tripled from 2,756 in 1998 to 8,268 in 2015. Creating a healthy planet starts locally and involves initiating change in a younger generation. Farmers have engaged over 23.5 million students in Farm to School programs which allows for locally grown foods to be available in schools. 44% of schools across 40 states utilize this program and help to improve their planet. Establishing this program in schools molds and educates future generation instilled with a passion for sustainable agriculture.

Agriculturalists have continuously moved toward sustainability by using less pesticides and natural resources. By using less pesticides, the reduction of harmful runoff is decreased, improving soil health and reducing the risk of water contamination. Rachel Carson, expert on toxic DDT pesticide, found that once entered into the food chain, DDT “accumulated in the fatty tissues of animals, including human beings, and caused cancer and genetic damage.” Today, this pesticide is no longer used by United States farmers creating a healthier population and planet. Innovative farmers can now allow for natural resources to be saved and managed responsibly through technology and data. California, during recent drought, utilized online resources such as the California Irrigation Management Information System which reduced their water use by 13% while increasing yields.

Agriculture has been broadcast as an environmental destroyer, yet we see their efforts to improve our environment. Agriculturalists have been leaders in showcasing the importance of sustainability. They have made advancements to improve our current planet and the future generation’s world. Creating more stewards of a healthy planet is essential for survival; luckily, God made a farmer.